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**Preparing Students for Success in the Workforce – An agricultural leadership
and career seminar course outline for secondary teachers.**

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A creative component dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty in
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Agricultural Education

Program of Study Committee:

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Ames, IA

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Throughout our nation, over 800,000 students actively participate in formal agricultural education (National FFA Organization, 2020). These programs pride themselves on allowing students to gain hands-on and experiential learning opportunities in the diverse array of sectors that comprise our agricultural industry. From Natural Resources and Food Science, to Animal/Plant Science and Ag Business, students are offered an opportunity to further explore the variety of pathways that the agricultural industry has to offer. In addition to all of this, agricultural education programs as well as Career and Technical Education programs in general, pride themselves on providing students with real-world experiences to benefit them as they continue into the workforce and/or post-secondary education.

Along with unique classroom experiences, students are also enhancing their real-world development skillsets while becoming involved in Career Development Events (CDEs), through the co-curricular organization, FFA. Even with all of these outstanding career preparation experiences at their fingertips, students are still continuing to leave the high school hallways with their diplomas in hand, but a lack of confidence and preparation going into the workforce. Students leave without a basic understanding of how to properly construct a resume and cover letter, market themselves as a candidate for entry-level positions, as well as display their understanding regarding the importance of obtaining employability skills.

If high school agricultural programs entertained the idea of truly enhancing their curriculum to not only prepare students to continue furthering their knowledge at the collegiate level, but emphasized on the importance of also providing students opportunities to succeed in the workforce area our state and nation would see a positive change in the amount of collegiate

drop outs and the success rate of students post high school graduation. As stated by Marcus, the enrollment levels of high school graduates continuing their education at college is at an all-time high, however the retention rate does not have a positive correlation (Marcus, Hechinger Report 2020). Statistics uncover nearly one out of every five students will terminate their post-secondary education before receiving a degree.

The Le Mars Community High School (LCHS) is nestled in Plymouth County in the northwest corner of Iowa. It is home to 676 students in ninth through twelfth grade. The high school campus currently includes a Career and Technical Education program that offers a diverse array of opportunities including agricultural-focused coursework. The agricultural program at LCHS currently has 102 students enrolled in an agricultural course. These courses range from Agri-Science 1&2 and Animal/Plant Science, all the way to Agricultural Mechanics/Construction and Ag Business/Marketing.

Agricultural Leadership and Career Seminar became part of the agricultural curriculum and course pathways in the 2019-2020 school year. LCHS currently has a working partnership with Western Iowa Tech Community (WITCC) College to allow students the option to take and receive dual credit while in high school. Agricultural Leadership and Career Seminar is offered at WITCC as a dual credit class to be paired in high school classrooms. This option was taken into consideration when adding the course to the agricultural curriculum pathway at LCHS to help motivate students furthermore to enroll in the course. A pre-requisition of students being upperclassmen was added to the high school's course catalog due to the focus of the course curriculum striving to enhance student preparation to obtain a career and enter the workforce in a successful manner post-graduation. The course spanned over the duration of 16 weeks, a full semester at LCHS. For the 2019-2020 school year, eight junior and senior students were enrolled

in the course. When looking towards the upcoming school year, 15 students are enrolled. To truly measure student growth in relation to confidence, preparation, and ability to succeed in the workforce following graduation, a survey was put in place at the beginning of the course to collect data on where students placed themselves in regards to career readiness and achieving successful careers in the industry. The survey was formatted on a Likert-scale with students selecting between 'strongly agree and strongly disagree. Ideally, students enrolled in the Agricultural Leadership and Career Seminar course would complete the survey within the first week of the course and again nearing the end of the semester to gain the most precise data. The overall goal of the addition to the Agricultural Leadership and Career Seminar course within the Le Mars Community High School's agricultural program is to continue enhancing student learning opportunities within the realm of career readiness and success when entering the workforce.

Incorporating new curriculum that exposes high school students to innovative strategies such as building a career portfolio, understanding employability assets and soft skills, in addition to increasing confidence in interviewing mannerisms, students will in turn have a new-found, empowering knowledge on work-place success. Through the addition of a curriculum pathway such as Agricultural Leadership and Career Seminar, students will have the opportunity to enhance their personal growth, leadership skillsets, and ultimately be prepared for career success, students will see that they have an abundant amount of options to explore upon graduating from high school. Entering the workforce directly, will no longer have a negative stigma towards it and the 'fear of the unknown' will be reduced. All of which will allow for each student within agricultural education programs at the high school level to truly reach their full potential and optimal success.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the early 1900s, vocational education more commonly known as Career and Technical Education (CTE) today, has been a key component of preparing students for success towards entering the workforce upon graduating from secondary education programs (Hughes, 2020). Career and Technical Education programs have proven to be an essential factor in allowing students to enhance their ‘employability skills’, gain unique hands-on experiences, and relate content to real-world applications that extend beyond their time in the classroom. Over the last several decades, the education industry has experienced both a decline and recent re-emergence of innovative CTE programs across the state and nation as an entirety (Jacob, 2017). Trade-focused jobs are high in demand for skilled students that know and value the importance of obtaining employability ‘soft’ skills, but also have the motivation and drive to work with labor-intense career paths. For example, when looking at the demand for jobs within the welding and agricultural industry, both industry fields are in desperate need of individuals to enter the workforce directly upon graduating from high school (Gross and Marcus, 2018).

With the opportunity for students to enter a significantly successful and profitable trade-focused career path subsequent to graduating from high school, when will educators stop deterring students away from this option and truly begin equipping students with the tools necessary to be successful in this possibility? The formal educational standards at the secondary level are focused solely around highlighting and encouraging core academic courses such as calculus, english, economics, etc. which students are driven away from crucial elective courses that are the driving force behind true workplace success and career preparation (Conroy, Dailey, and Shelly-Tolbert, 2001). Although students are offered a diverse array of rigorous coursework to choose from at the high school level, upon moving their tassel and receiving their diplomas,

over half of the student population lack confidence and the feeling of preparation to succeed in the collegiate or career field. In a study conducted by YouthTruth, over 165,000 students were asked if they feel truly prepared to succeed in a career path or at the collegiate level following graduation from high school – results from surveys indicated that less than 45% of students respond with the answer ‘yes’ towards career preparation and workplace success (Leal, 2015).

When considering the ‘why’ behind the lack of preparation students feel towards career and workplace success post high school graduation, researchers must also take into consideration learning theories, and the most beneficial route of incorporating resourceful curriculum to eliminate this gap. Bandura’s social cognitive learning theory is founded upon the idea that the most influential ways students learn is in relation to their own experiences and social influences (LaMorte, 2019). One major aspect of Bandura’s theory is self- efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to the level of confidence an individual has with their ability to complete a task successfully (Bandura, 1960s). When relating this concept to student preparation towards career success, to truly allow students the most optimal experience, educators must give them the opportunity to experience first-hand career preparation. By incorporating a curriculum that integrates basic workplace qualifications, employability skills, and a professional career portfolio, students will have the unique opportunity to gain hands-on experiences within this realm that will in turn enhance their self-efficacy towards career preparation and success.

Establishing progressive curriculum that welcomes innovative strategies among Career and Technical Education Programs, specifically agricultural education, within high schools across Iowa and the nation as a whole, is crucial in eliminating the lack of preparation felt by students entering the workforce directly upon graduating from high school. The Le Mars Agricultural Education Program has partnered with Western Iowa Tech Community College in

generating an Agricultural Leadership and Career Seminar course that includes a diverse array of learning opportunities for students to undergo based on the research methods, learning theories, and innovative strategies included above, to offer students a course that encourages workplace success post-graduation.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The establishment of the Agricultural Leadership and Career Seminar curriculum into high school agricultural programs across the state and nation, truly strives to involve upperclassman students in innovative strategies that enhance their preparation for work-place success upon graduating from high school. The lessons included within the curriculum focus on students building a professional career portfolio consisting of an adequate resume, cover letter, references and job interview skills that allow them to feel more confident in their abilities to enter the workforce after their high school career. This curriculum is intended to take place over the duration of a semester or trimester depending on the specific school. In addition, it is recommended that students enroll in this course throughout their junior or senior year in the high school agricultural program to ensure the resources gained will have the most retention and opportunity to be utilized beyond the walls of the classroom as they begin their journey in the real-world.

This curriculum also has the opportunity to be incorporated into the high school agricultural program as a dual credit option if the school has a working relationship with the local community college such as: Western Iowa Tech Community College (WITCC), Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC), Ellsworth, etc. In these specific circumstances, the community college agricultural department often times provides the high school with an outline of what content topics must be covered, but leave the details and specifics up to the agricultural educator. The curriculum provided throughout this creative component seeks to aid agricultural educators at the high school level in implementing the details corresponding with the collegiate requirements in a creative and unique way to ensure optimal student growth. With all of this being said, it is not necessary for the high school to have an established relationship with a

community college for this curriculum to be beneficial within the agricultural pathways that are offered.

When assessing the materials necessary to ensure success with the addition of this curriculum, it is relatively an inexpensive course to offer. The only materials in need of purchasing include a class set of the *Habitude – Images that form Leadership Habits and Attitudes* by Dr. Tim Elmore. Other aspects to consider in the success of implementing this curriculum includes student accessibility to laptops/Chromebooks/IPads. The units comprising this curriculum are very flexible and easy to transition as needed to fit the high school agricultural program's class schedule, school calendar format, and student needs. Overall, implementation of the Agricultural Leadership and Career Seminar curriculum strives to strengthen student's opportunities to grow in their career success, self-efficacy, and will leave the high school as contributing citizens within the society and future generations of our world.

CHAPTER 4 – PRODUCT CURRICULUM

Statement of Problem –

High school agricultural programs clearly provide an immeasurable amount of beneficial learning opportunities to their students. With this being said, to continue the positive progression of high school agricultural programs, investigating the impact that the addition of career seminar and leadership courses have on the career preparation among students is an idea worth consideration.

-- Does the addition of Agricultural Career Seminar and Leadership courses to high school agricultural programs, have an impact on the career preparation and employability success of graduating seniors continuing into the workforce? –

Objectives –

1. Provide agricultural educators with a descriptive outline of instruction to incorporate agricultural leadership and career seminar as a course in their agricultural program's curriculum pathway.
2. Increase the pathways of high school agricultural education programs through the addition of a capstone course that will ultimately lead to a higher percentage of student success in the transition from high school to the workforce upon graduation.
3. Describe resources for implementing a work-study / internship focused instruction for junior and senior students interested in broadening their horizons in the agricultural field.

4. Describe a course outline for agricultural educators at the high school level that will increase the ability to demonstrate proper career preparation skillsets among junior and senior students enrolled in the agricultural program.

Weekly Course Outline –

Humans are creatures of habit. With this in mind, students enjoy having structure in place throughout many aspects of their life. By providing structure, they have the knowledge of what to expect, and furthermore have the ability to enhance their experience through proper preparation. To incorporate structure into an Agricultural Leadership and Career Seminar course, a weekly schedule has the opportunity to be implemented to increase the optimal learning opportunities of each and every student enrolled in the course.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>‘Move-It Mondays!’</p> <p>-- Incorporate an active leadership activity as a class, to encourage an inviting classroom environment where collaboration, teamwork, and problem solving take place.</p> <p>-- Self-reflection from previous week’s activities and lesson.</p>	<p>Habitude Books</p> <p>-- Each week read assigned chapter from Habitudes book.</p> <p>-- Discuss and collaborate on the worksheet aligning with the chapter.</p> <p>-- Challenge activity for the week.</p>	<p>Unit of Week</p> <p>-- Opening to lesson of the week.</p> <p>·</p> <p>-- Work through material relevant to lesson as a class.</p>	<p>Unit of Week</p> <p>-- Continue working on unit that began on Wednesday.</p> <p>-- Individual student time for projects related to lessons.</p>	<p>‘FFA & Real-World Fridays!’</p> <p>-- Friday’s will be spent growing and enhancing the FFA Chapter by completing leadership activities that align with what we’re currently doing in the chapter, as well as that relate to the real-world.</p>

Syllabus for Agricultural Leadership & Career Seminar –

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1m0G3pBvrvli8W3yXsu37oerfAPRlhDaR/view?usp=sharing>

Course Curriculum Lesson Plans –Lesson One – SMART Goals & You

Objectives:

- Students will have the ability to identify the difference between an immeasurable/non-realistic goal and a SMART goal.
- Students will demonstrate their real-world connections of SMART goals while recording three of their own for the duration of the school year.
- Students will be able to justify and explain the importance of having SMART goals to their fellow peers through a ‘Challenge Activity’.

Materials:

- Career Foundations Binder
- SMART Goals Worksheet
- Pens/Pencils

Anticipatory Set:

- New Year’s Resolutions Article
- Students individually read on their own, highlight key points, come back together and discuss as a class.

Outline:

- Collaborate and walk through SMART Goals PPT as a class.
- Discuss difference between three categories of goals (short term, intermediate term, long term).
- As an educator, share out some of your own personal goals.
- Students complete SMART Goals Worksheet individually.
- Ask for volunteers to share out one of their smart goals.
- Discuss how SMART goals lead to success in every aspect of life.

Assessment:

- Formative – SMART Goals Worksheet

Lesson Two – Employability Skills

Objectives:

- Students will have the ability to discover the top ten employability skills that companies across the nation are in search of while utilizing scholarly articles of their choice as resources.
- Students will have the ability to justify the importance of recognizing and strengthening their employability skills as young adults through in-class discussion and self-reflection of their areas of strengths and weaknesses.
- Students will have the ability to uncover their unique personality test and relate those findings to their own areas of strengths and weaknesses as upcoming generations of individuals heading into the workforce through the Meyers/Briggs Personality Test.

Materials:

- Career Foundations Binder
- Chromebooks/laptops/IPads
- Meyers/Briggs Personality Test Result Description Handouts
- Scholarly Articles
- Pens/Pencils

Anticipatory Set:

- Have students think back to when they had a wonderful experience working with someone, as well as when they had a poor experience with an individual in the workplace.
- Why was this? How did it change your experience? How does this relate to the importance of ‘soft-skills’ in the workplace?
- Mind Map – Individually ‘What are soft skills?’
- Come together as class and create mind-map on the board of ‘soft-skills’ thoughts.

Outline:

- As a class, begin a discussion on employability skills. Ask each student on the back of their mind-map to write down three skills they believe fall within the top ten employability skills. Give students one minute to do so. Have them ‘Turn and Talk’ with table partners.
- Have each student or group share out one skillset. Create a list of the top ten employability skills that the students have creatively come up with as a class.
- Walk students through process of using scholarly articles.
- Give students 15 minutes to independently research the top ten employability skills in demand today.
- Come back together as a class to collaborate on employability skills.

- Why are these skills so important? How easy are they to complete? Why is it necessary that we begin practicing these skillsets at a young age? – Think-Pair-Share.
- Have students complete the Meyers/Briggs Personality Test.
- Follow Up Questions –
 - What is your personality type?
 - How strongly do you agree with the description for your personality type?
 - Do you agree with the strengths and weaknesses listed for your personality type?
 - Does this help justify and explain why you are the way that you are?
 - Pick out two strengths and weaknesses that you agree with from your personality type description.
- Split students into groups of 3-4 and have them share out their personality type and description.
 - Have the other students in the group share out if they agree or disagree with their fellow classmate's personality type description.
 - Have students also share out the two strengths and weaknesses that they strongly associate with from their personality type.
- Give students a generous amount of time to complete this activity. They become very excited to share out with their classmates and truly have great discussion related to the topic.
- Reflection – Have students reflect on how their personality type's strengths and weaknesses align with the employability skills that come easily to them, as well as the areas that they can improve in. In addition, make sure that students print off and include a hard copy of their Meyers/Briggs Personality Test Results in their 'Careers Foundation' binder to include in their 'Career Portfolio' capstone project.

Assessment:

- Formative:
 - Meyers/Briggs Personality Test
 - Highlighting Strengths & Weaknesses
- Summative:
 - Reflection Essay on Personality Test

Lesson Three – Resume Building

Objectives:

- Students will have the ability to strengthen their skills in the area of resume building while completing a professional resume for themselves.
- Students will have the ability to broaden their written communication skillsets while peer reviewing another individual's resume.
- Students will have the ability to succeed in achieving an entry level position through the assistance of their resume-building skills.

Materials:

- Careers Foundation Binder
- Access to Chromebooks/laptops/IPads
- Example Resumes and Templates
- Marshmallows
- Spaghetti Noodles
- Tape

Anticipatory Set:

- 'Build this Pyramid' Activity!
- Split students into groups of 3-4 and give them the following materials only:
 - 10 uncooked spaghetti noodles
 - 1 marshmallow
 - 5 pieces of tape
- Give the students 10 minutes to race in building the tallest tower. The only catch is that the marshmallow has to be able to balance on top of the tower, and nothing can be taped to the table/floor/etc.

Outline:

- Build off of anticipatory set and talk about how the resume is like the bottom of our tower ... it is a solid foundation for career success and preparation!
- Walk through 'How to Build a Resume' 101 PPT together as a class.
- Create a proper resume template together as a class while utilizing the whiteboard for students to collaborate their ideas.
- Handout resume templates and examples to students.
- Have students complete a step by step process to eliminate them becoming overwhelmed.
- Students will utilize a checklist as well with due dates to ensure they are staying on task with the independent work time allotted for in class.
- Microsoft Word or Google Docs will be utilized by students to complete their resumes.

- Ask students to complete and hand in a rough draft. Assign students partners to peer edit the rough drafts.
- Give students time to complete the edits and recommendations before asking them to turn in their final draft.
- Make sure students save a copy of the final draft of their resume to include in their 'Careers Foundation' Binder as a part of their 'Career Portfolio' capstone project.

Assessment:

- Formative:
 - Rough Draft of Resume
 - Peer Edit Recommendations
- Summative:
 - Final Draft of Resume

Lesson Four – References

Objectives:

- Students will have the ability to enhance their professional communication skillsets while reaching out via a formal email to mentors/coaches/teachers in request for them to be a reference.
- Students will explore the importance of having a diverse array of references within a career portfolio to speak upon your behalf.
- Students will demonstrate proper understanding of a references page while creating one of their own to add to their career portfolio for future use.

Materials:

- Career Foundations Binder
- Access to Chromebooks/laptops/IPads
- Pens/Pencils

Anticipatory Set:

- ‘Speaking on Their Behalf’ Activity.
- As students walk into the classroom, hand them a note-card with one of their fellow classmates name on it. Give the students five minutes at the beginning of class to write up a brief explanation as to why someone should hire that individual to join their company or team.
- Have students volunteer until each have shared out as a class. This will get students laughing and set the stage for references.

Outline:

- What are professional references? How do they differ from family members and close friends speaking on your behalf?
- ‘Selecting the right references’ discussion. Who is the right fit? Why?
- Have each student select three individuals that they feel fit to be their references. Have them turn and talk with their elbow partner.
- Call on students to share out.
- How to go about contacting individuals to request them to be a reference ...
 - Professional Emails 101
 - Create a professional email as a class utilizing the whiteboard as an outline space.

- After creating a proper template, turn each student loose to send out professional emails to their references for permission. Have them 'cc' you in on the emails to receive full credit.

- Creating a Reference Page – PPT – Go through as a class.
- Have students begin creating their own references page utilizing google documents or a word document. Make sure they include the same header that is on their resume for consistency.
- Have them turn in their completed reference page and print out a hard copy to add to their 'Career Foundations' binder for their 'Career Portfolio' capstone project.

Assessment:

- Formative:
 - Professional Emails
- Summative:
 - References Page

Lesson Five – Cover Letters 101

Objectives:

- Students will have the ability to flourish and continue strengthening their written communication skills while composing a professional cover letter.
- Students will enhance their editing abilities while peer reviewing and providing recommendations for their fellow classmates in the realm of cover letters.
- Students will continue to grow in their ability to be prepared to succeed in the workforce upon graduating from college through the enhancement of their professional career portfolio.

Materials:

- Career Foundations Binder
- Access to Chromebooks/laptops/IPads
- Examples of cover letters and templates
- Pens/Pencils

Anticipatory Set:

- Who would you hire? Activity.
- Give each pair of students' two different cover letter examples. As a pair, have them read through both cover letters and select who they would choose to add to their team.
- Have them write down why they went with this option. Come back together as a class and have each group share out who they selected and why.

Outline:

- The Basics of Cover Letters PPT
- Breakdown of a cover letter – Introduction Paragraph, Body Paragraph, Closing Paragraph. Further discuss what to include within each one.
- Hand out examples of cover letters as well as cover letter templates to each student.
- Have students spend some time researching and select an entry-level position that is of interest to them. This is the company that they will be writing their cover letter to.
- Guide students paragraph by paragraph through writing the first draft of their cover letter.
- Following this, have students peer edit each other's cover letters. Fix recommendations, and turn in final draft. Spend this time in class meeting with student pairs one-on-one to discuss any areas that might be of confusion to them.
- Have students print off and save a copy of their final draft inside their 'Career Foundations' binder for their capstone project.

Assessment:

- Formative: Rough Draft of Cover Letter & Peer Edits
- Summative: Final Draft of Cover Letter

Lesson Six – Building Your Brand

Objectives:

- Students will have the ability to explore how to utilize social media in a positive way to further the success of our professional self-image.
- Students will have the ability to justify the importance of understanding ‘Social Media Do’s and Don’ts’ and the impact it can have on career success.
- Students will be able to discover a diverse array of professional social media platforms that can lead to increased networking connections through the creation of their own LinkedIn account.

Materials:

- Career Foundations Binder
- Access to Chromebooks/laptops/IPads
- Phones – only for this specific unit
- Pens/Pencils

Anticipatory Set:

- ‘Who are you?’ Activity
- Students will have a t-shirt diagram on both sides of a worksheet sitting at their desk. Have them spend the first two minutes of class filling out the front of the worksheet. They will be tasked with writing down anything and everything that defines them and who they are. For example: teacher, mother, writer, runner, athlete, singer, etc.
- Following this, have them each share out one thing they wrote on the front of their worksheet.
- Now, have each student flip over their worksheet to the back side and write their name at the top. Leave the t-shirt blank though. At this time, each student is going to walk around the room and write down one (positive) word that defines another one of their classmates – how they see them.
- Feel free to play some music in the background. Give students around 5-7 minutes to complete this activity.
- Have students make their way back to their desks and give students 30 seconds to read all of their classmates’ descriptions about how they are viewed to themselves. This really touches a lot of the students.
- Ask students how they feel about how their classmate see them. Allow them to ponder quietly, how they want to be remembered ... what is their legacy?

Outline:

- Utilize the anticipatory set to jump into the importance of how our actions directly impact the way others view us. Think-Pair-Share – How do our actions impact the relationships that we have with others? How many positive comments does it take to erase a negative comment? Again, what do you want to be remembered for? – Have students write this one down on a notecard.
- How Does Social Media Relate to Career Success PPT – Go through as a class and have an open-ended discussion on points.
- Social Media Clean-Up Activity!
 - Have students take out their phone at this time and go through their social media platforms. Make sure all negative or inappropriate posts are erased.
- Ways to use social media positively ...
 - Have students create a mind-map related to this topic.
 - Come together as a class and have them write their ideas on the whiteboard.
 - Discuss together.
 - Sharing positive news, building others up, sharing factual articles, networking, etc.
- Building a LinkedIn Profile
 - Walk students through what LinkedIn is – professional/career oriented Facebook
 - Give students guideline worksheet and rubric on what to include in their profiles.
 - In-class time to work on creating profiles.

Assessment:

- Formative:
 - Participating in Social Media Clean-Up
- Summative:
 - Creating LinkedIn Profile

Lesson Seven – Succeeding in Scholarships

Objectives:

- Students will have the ability to properly research and apply for scholarships utilizing scholarly websites given in class.
- Students will have the ability to further their written communication skills while applying how to properly compose a scholarship essay.
- Students will have the ability to justify the importance behind properly completing scholarship applications and the impact they can have on your financial ability to attend a technical college or university.

Materials:

- Career Foundations Binder
- Access to Chromebooks/laptops/IPads
- List of Scholarships
- Pens/Pencils

Anticipatory Set:

- Student Loans?! Yikes! Video
- Monopoly Money Activity – Hand out random amounts of monopoly money to each student as they walk in the classroom door. Give a few generous amounts, a few small amounts, and even a few none. After letting the students ponder for a bit, have them stand up if they received a generous amount – explain that these students took the time to complete scholarship applications and have nearly all of their tuition covered. Continue this same method with the students that received small amounts, and so on.

Outline:

- ‘Why scholarships are important’ discussion.
- Hand out student loan scenario snippets. Have students read through individually, then discuss as a class the difference that a scholarship can make. Share personal experiences as well if you have them.
- The Basics of Financial Aid – PPT – Walk through as a class to help address the differences between scholarships, grants, loans, and FAFSA.
- Addressing the scary acronym – FAFSA
 - Walk students through an overview of FAFSA, as well as direct them on how to complete the FAFSA application.
- Applying for Scholarships!

- Set aside 2-3 days in class for students to truly get a kick-start on applying for scholarships. I encourage my students to apply for the state and national FFA scholarship at this time.
- If you have juniors taking the class, have them practice writing a basic scholarship application essay that they can utilize in the future.
- Students will be asked to turn in the National FFA Scholarship Application Essay or the Basic Scholarship Application Essay and it will be included in the gradebook to increase motivation. In addition, have them save a copy to their google drive as well to ensure accessibility for future use.

Assessment:

- Formative:
 - Beginning FAFSA and Participating in Scholarship Research
- Summative:
 - Scholarship Application

Lesson Eight – Job Interviews – The Basics

Objectives:

- Students will have the ability to discover the unique attributes that allow candidates to shine during the job interview portion of the hiring process.
- Students will have the ability to strengthen their confidence as they head into the workforce upon graduating while receiving feedback and recommendations from an interview panel of instructional coaches.
- Students will have the ability to enhance their verbal communication skills and truly feel prepared to enter the workforce while completing a mock job-interview in class.

Materials:

- Career Foundations Binder
- Access to Chromebooks/laptops/IPads
- Notecards
- Pens/Pencils

Anticipatory Set:

- ‘Webby to Webby’ Activity!
- The very first step in an interview process, is the handshake. Having a proper handshake, will allow job interview candidates to start off the selection process strong! Give your students time to practice in a fun way, and it’s a great introduction to the job interview unit.
- Open up by listing off the five different types of handshakes – ‘wet noodle’, ‘too firm’, ‘finger-tip’, ‘pumping’, and ‘webby to webby’.
- Then have all of the students stand up and go shake five of their classmates’ hands using the ‘Webby to Webby’ method!

Outline:

- Kick off this unit by having the students create a t-chart for two minutes related to the ‘Do’s and Don’ts’ of a job interview. After giving the students a few minutes, create a giant t-chart on the board and have each student come up and write an idea on either side.
- Following this, discuss the differences among the t-chart and how to handle certain situations in an interview.
- Go through a breakdown of a job interview. The handshake, the interviewing portion, handing out resume/references, asking questions at the end, and finalizing with a thank you.

- After the basic breakdown of a job interview have been discussed, go ahead and give the class time to research ten questions that are commonly asked in an interview. Create a google document or word document with these questions.
- After the students have completed this, have them choose from the discussion board where students combined all of their discovered interview questions, ten that they would like to answer themselves.
- Have students write the interview questions they selected on one side of notecards (that will be provided to them), and on the back side write their answer to the interview questions. They can use these later on to help them prepare for the mock job interview.
- After accomplishing all of this, the students will continue on to prepare and practice for the mock job interview.
 - Assign them a partner that they will spend a class hour preparing with. Each student in the pairs will take turns holding the position of the interviewer and candidate.
 - The students will also have the opportunity to create a scenario for the job that they are interviewing for which is what the mock panel will be given to help guide them throughout the interview.
- Test their abilities with a mock job interview. Have fellow faculty or community members sit in on a panel with a rubric provided to them to truly allow students to have a real-world scenario feel.
 - Have students dress the part as well and bring their resume to truly create a real-world scenario.
 - While the students take turns completing their mock interview, have the others sit in a designated area in the classroom or in the shop working on other class projects such as their Iowa Degrees, Scholarship Applications, or SAE records.

Assessment:

- Formative:
 - Job Interview Questions
 - Answering Job Interview Questions – Notecards
 - Participating in peer preparation for mock job interview
- Summative:
 - Mock Job Interview Presentation

Lesson Nine – The Niche to Networking

Objectives:

- Students will have the ability to further their networking skills while communicating with industry professionals within their community.
- Students will have the ability to broaden their horizons on the career pathways in the agricultural industry while interviewing industry professionals on their agricultural career.
- Students will have the ability to explore the diverse array of options that the agricultural industry has to offer in terms of career pathways and unique opportunities to continue growing through the relationships students build with industry professionals.

Materials:

- Career Foundations Binder
- Access to Chromebooks/laptops/IPads
- Set of Interview Questions
- Ball of yarn
- Pens/Pencils

Anticipatory Set:

- ‘The Knot’ Game
- Ask students to stand in a circle around the classroom. Stand in the circle with them and have a ball of yarn present. Start out by stating the following directions –
 - Let’s see how many connections all of us have within the agricultural industry and to one another. The person that has the ball of yarn will say any way that they are connected to the agricultural industry (i.e.: showing livestock, having a garden at home, etc.).
 - If you also have that same connection with agriculture, speak up and the ball of yarn will be tossed to someone that has the same connection.
- At the end, you will have a giant knot of yarn stringing from every student to another in a unique manner. However, this goes to show us that agriculture has so many diverse opportunities for everyone to explore and find their true passion.

Outline:

- This unit will be solely focused on networking with industry professionals. Go ahead and begin the unit by going discussing proper networking techniques.

- Show full interest when talking to the individual, eye contact, active listening, etc.
- Do background research before talking with a company so that you have an idea of what they do.
- More information included within 'The Niche of Networking' PPT
- After covering the basics, briefly remind students to keep their minds open to the array of career pathways that the agricultural industry has to offer. They can stick to the traditional route that they are most closely connected to, or branch out.
- Turn the class loose on preparing their interview worksheets for the Networking with Industry Professionals assignment of this unit.
 - The students will be asked to reach out to three different individuals within the agricultural industry, and ask them ten questions related to their job / journey in the agricultural field.
 - Only one interview is allowed to be conducted with a relative – the other two must be with someone new. In addition, ideally the interviews would take place in person and the students would snap a picture with the industry professional. However, depending on the circumstances, interviews might have to be conducted via phone or email.
- Have students turn in interviews from the industry professionals in a Discussion Board online. Following this, have the students respond to two interviews posted from their classmates that spoke to them or interested them in a way.

Assessment:

- Formative:
 - N/A
- Summative:
 - Industry Professional Interviews

Lesson Ten – Exploring Career Pathways

Objectives:

- Students will have the ability to develop skillsets adequate to enter the workforce upon graduating from high school through hands-on, real-world experiences that extend beyond the walls of a classroom.
- Students will have the ability to prepare for career success and strengthen their confidence while building relationships with an agricultural company within the community.
- Students will have the ability to explore their passion and area of interest in the agricultural industry before accepting a full-time position by taking on a job-shadow with an agricultural company in the community.

Materials:

- Career Foundations Binder
- Access to Chromebooks/laptops/IPads
- Time Log Worksheet
- Record Keeping Worksheet
- Guidelines for Work Experience Placement

Anticipatory Set:

- Share statistics of college students that change their major within their time at college. Chat about why it's alright for students to change their major until they truly find their passion. Have students go around and share something that they are passionate and what they think their future plans are currently.
- Build off of this into a conversation about how we all have different paths that we choose to take in life. One path is no greater than the other, it all depends on our unique interests and passion as people. For instance, some of us might choose to enter the workforce after high school, some of us might opt to go to a technical/trade school, and others might choose to attend a university.

Outline:

- 'Exploring Career Pathways' is the last unit of this course! It is a three-week time period that students will spend furthering their knowledge outside the walls of the classroom and learn from a short-term job shadow experience with an agricultural company from the community.
- Instead of coming to school during this class period, students will go to their job-shadow placement to gain experiences there. They will continue doing so for three-weeks, and

then will come back to school at the duration of the final (fourth) week to reflect and complete their career portfolio capstone project.

- Students will select the place of their job-shadow experience a month before the placement begins. Both the agricultural company hosting the student and the student completing the job shadow opportunity, will sign a letter of agreement along with administration.
- The students will be asked to log at least one hour each day at their job-shadow placement – for a total of a minimum of 15 hours at least, keep records on tasks that they complete or areas where their knowledge has expanded. They must record enough data and information to write a reflection paper on the experience.
- Students will be graded based upon their records, hours completed, and the reflection paper.

Assessment:

- Formative:
 - Record Keeping Worksheets
 - Time Hours Worksheet
 - Reports from Job-Shadow Mentor
- Summative:
 - Reflection Essay on Job-Shadow

Other Course Content –

Habitude Books Overview –

Objectives:

- Students will have the ability to open their minds to the diverse array of characteristics that comprise a true and great leader.
- Students will have the ability to discover their own unique leadership strengths that set them apart from others.
- Students will have the ability to connect the ideas of true leadership with their relationships and activities in the real-world through the completion of chapter readings and in-class discussions.

Materials:

- Career Foundations Binder
- Habitudes – Images that Form Leadership Habits & Attitudes by Dr. Tim Elmore
- Chapter Worksheet Pages

Outline:

- Each week, we will read a chapter of the Habitudes book as a class, then students will be asked to complete the corresponding worksheet individually. Following the completion of the worksheet, the remainder of the class period will be spent completing an in-class discussion where we breakdown the chapter, share how the leadership stories within it relate to our own individual experiences, and how we can continue to grow as leaders.
- After the chapter has been dissected as a class, move into introducing the Challenge Activity that correlates and aligns with the leadership characteristics discussed in the specific chapter.

Challenge Activities –

Objectives:

- Students will have the ability to try out their hand putting the leadership characteristics learned throughout the Habitude chapters to real-world scenarios.
- Students will have the ability to strengthen their leadership activities while organizing and participating in a diverse array of co-curricular FFA events.

- Students will be able to see the impact that true leadership has on those around them while completing the unique challenge activities.

Outline:

- A list of several Challenge Activities that can be incorporated into the course curriculum are included below:
 - 'Cream of the Crop' notes to underclassmen and younger FFA members.
 - Thank You notes to parents, mentors, coaches, teachers, etc.
 - Coordinating an 'Ag in the Classroom' for an elementary school.
 - Organizing a 'Middle School Ag Day Tour' of the Ag Program.
 - Creating a short video to shine positive light on the agricultural industry.
 - Write a 'Good News Gram' to a member that completed a CDE.
 - Write a letter to someone who has inspired you.
 - Congratulations letters to new officers and students that received their Iowa Degrees.
 - Fill up someone's bucket!
 - Volunteer at local nursing home with chapter during the holiday season.

CHAPTER 6 – REFLECTION

The addition of Agricultural Leadership and Career Seminar curriculum within the agricultural department of the Le Mars Community High School CTE program, will be utilized as a unique strategy and learning opportunity to bring student experiences and career preparation to the most optimal outcome for many years to come. With the diverse array of learning experiences this coursework offers towards students enhancing their success to enter the workforce upon graduating, it will significant beneficial value for countless years to come. In addition to all of this, the creative coursework and design allows flexibility for other school districts across the state and nation with agricultural education programs to incorporate as a resource for their students. By offering students the opportunity to develop professional qualities at a young age before truly entering the workforce, education systems will not only be preparing students for success, but in turn will also be strengthening the future of our trade industries.

By adding an innovative curriculum which encourages students to explore the idea of entering the workforce directly upon graduation rather than leading them to assume that college or postsecondary education is the only option, the education system will begin to reduce the number of collegiate drop outs and increase the number of contributing citizens to the society. In addition, through the diverse array of experiential learning opportunities students will gain and have the opportunity to apply in real-world settings over the duration of the Agricultural

Leadership and Career Seminar course, the gap between students entering the workforce with a lack of career readiness and preparation will be reduced significantly as well.

From personal experiences and looking back in retrospect at my own high school career and agricultural pathways included, I wish I would've been given the opportunity to be enrolled in a course similar to that of Agricultural Leadership and Career Seminar. It was not until my freshman year of college, I was challenged to professionally complete a resume and cover letter for the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Career Fair at Iowa State University. In addition, I did not have the slightest idea regarding how to market myself as a qualified candidate for an internship or an entry level position. Although my agricultural courses and FFA allowed me to enhance my leadership skills, I was most definitely lacking in the area of career readiness. I truly feel any student would benefit tremendously from being enrolled in a course that gives them the opportunity to explore their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the workplace, establish a professional career portfolio, and have confidence in their abilities to conduct a professional job interview.

To gain pure, genuine feedback from other agricultural educators on the benefits this unique curriculum could introduce to their agricultural education program at the high school setting, I reached out to a few other agricultural educators from across the state of Iowa. Out of the three individuals I spoke with, one does not currently have an agricultural course that aligns with the curriculum structure, but is highly interested in integrating this curriculum as an offered course to their junior and senior students. The second individual currently has an agricultural leadership course, but simply utilizes it as an 'FFA Planning Period' for her students. After looking at the curriculum, she is motivated to incorporate a similar curriculum that will provide her students with more optimal learning opportunities that will truly benefit their future. The

third agricultural educator that I had examine this course curriculum, actually incorporated it into his agricultural leadership class this spring in unison with how I implemented it within my own classroom. Throughout the duration of the semester, he was an incredibly significant resource to collaborate with on what units/ideas worked how they were originally intended to, and how others had room for potential improvement for future semesters.

One of the main sectors that was in need of improvement towards the beginning of the semester that I collaborated with the third agricultural educator on, focused towards how to properly incorporate the Habitudes book in a way that motivated students. Throughout the first few weeks, it was a challenge for the both of us to catch student interest related to the Habitude books and excite them to actually complete the readings. After seeing this pattern, we collaborated and came up with the idea of including ‘Move-It Monday’ activities that related to the leadership ability being discussed in the upcoming chapter to catch their interest, and close off each chapter with a ‘Challenge Activity’ that allowed the students to further explore the leadership quality discussed in a real-world setting. This proved to be very successful, and was maintained throughout the duration of the semester. I greatly appreciated having the opportunity to gain insight from other agricultural educators on the curriculum to see how it would most optimally align with their teaching philosophies and be utilized within their unique classroom setting and program pathway.

Currently, our students are held to the highest academic standards, yet lack the ability to recall and apply employability skillsets to the real-world. By offering a curriculum that is easy to implement, offers flexibility within CTE programs, such as agricultural education, I strive to assist countless other agricultural educators and CTE departments to incorporate this curriculum as a part of their course offerings. In turn, I hope we can strengthen the future of agriculturalists

and trade industry professionals by enhancing the ‘soft’ and employability skills of our students to the point of career readiness and success in the workplace directly following graduation. Our education industry is a field that is constantly growing and progressing to provide our students and future generations with the most optimal learning opportunities and an atmosphere that will prepare them for success in the real world. After completing continuous research and implementing this curriculum into my own classroom, I have no doubt that it will only continue to help the education field, specifically Career and Technical Education programs such as agricultural education, continue to grow and flourish in a progressive manner for years to come.

Over the last two years, I have greatly appreciating undergoing the opportunity to further my knowledge in the agricultural education field while completing the rigorous coursework offered by the Agricultural Education Masters Program at Iowa State University. The faculty have challenged me to truly discover my teaching philosophy while aligning the purpose behind my career path, to the importance that it has on our ever-changing and growing agriculture and education industries. In addition, the classes have broadened my knowledge and experience in the areas of teaching strategies, learning theories, and extending learning opportunities beyond the walls of a classroom and into real-world scenarios to enhance the benefits. While enhancing my skillsets related to the aspect of how I align the teaching strategies incorporated in my classroom with the unique learning styles of my students and learning theories researched by monumental individuals in the education world, I feel more equipped than ever to continue offering the most optimal learning environment for my students. Along with everything stated above, working alongside incredible faculty at Iowa State through their Masters Program, has inspired and encouraged me to consider the diverse array of agricultural education opportunities outside of formal education at the high school level. I gratefully look forward to utilizing the

new-found knowledge given to me through this opportunity to create the most innovative and optimal learning opportunities for my current students, and be one of the many individuals that aids in leaving a positive impact on our agricultural industry through education and advocacy.

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